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**NEWS BY
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FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION AMONG TOP PRIORITIES FOR MACEDONIANS

Reforms in the fields of health and education systems top the list of the most needed reforms to improve the daily life of the citizens, concludes the latest report from the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (MCIC). While almost one third of the citizens (32%) put the health system first, almost a quarter (23%) prefer education. In third place in terms of importance is the fight against corruption (12%). The results are startling, considering previous research in which the first few places are reserved for so-called 'existential' issues such as employment, poverty or the economy in general. Judicial reform is the highest priority for 11% of the citizens. For 6% or less of the citizens, public administration reform, better environment and protection of human rights are top priorities.

Source: MCIC, 26 June 2020

MONTENEGRIN ELECTIONS IN TIMES OF PANDEMIC

Dragan Koprivica, Executive Director of the Center for Democratic Transition, sent a letter to Milutin Simovic, President of the National Coordination Body (NCT) for infectious diseases, proposing a special session to discuss important issues and dilemmas regarding holding elections amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Dragan Koprivica requested that the conditions for holding elections be specified and objective. He further suggested that NCT determine which events are allowed alongside the rules of "door-to-door" campaigning. He further insisted that selectivity in the application of governmental measures would be detrimental to the legitimacy of the election process. It would thus be necessary to prepare a document regarding the manner of conducting the campaign in the conditions of COVID-19, which will contain general suggestions and promise the greatest possible degree of agreement. Koprivica reminded Simovic that the Constitutional Court of Croatia had annulled the provisions that were intended to prohibit voting for those whose movement is restricted. "This right must be respected in our country".

Source: Center for Democratic Transition, July, 2020

FIRST SESSION OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM COUNCIL HELD IN MONTENEGRO AFTER A YEAR



The 12th session of the [Public Administration Reform Council](#) was held on 19 June 2020. The session was chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister for Political System, Interior and Foreign Policy, Zoran Pažin, one year after the last session held in May 2019. The council has not been discussing important issues raised by the civil society, such as the proposed amendments to the Law on the Free Access to Information.

Source: Institut Alternativa, July 2020

JUDICIARY REFORMS IN MONTENEGRO: RISK OF LOSING THE MOMENTUM

Further progress of Montenegro towards the EU requires that all actors contribute to both the democratisation of society and the further strengthening of national institutions, otherwise all previous results would remain in the shadow of the third mandate in the judiciary and dysfunctional parliament. This was assessed at the session of the Parliamentary Committee for the Political System on June 30, in which a consultative hearing was held on the topic “Challenges in the field of judicial and public administration reform and further building of the balance of results”, initiated by the Center for Democratic Transition. The session discussed CDT’s research reports on the judiciary and public administration. Milica Kovačević, CDT’s President, affirmed the general opinion that the situation in the judiciary is worse than two years ago when the CDT last did research.

Source: Center for Democratic Transition, July, 2020

DATABASE WITH PUBLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE FIELD OF CORRUPTION

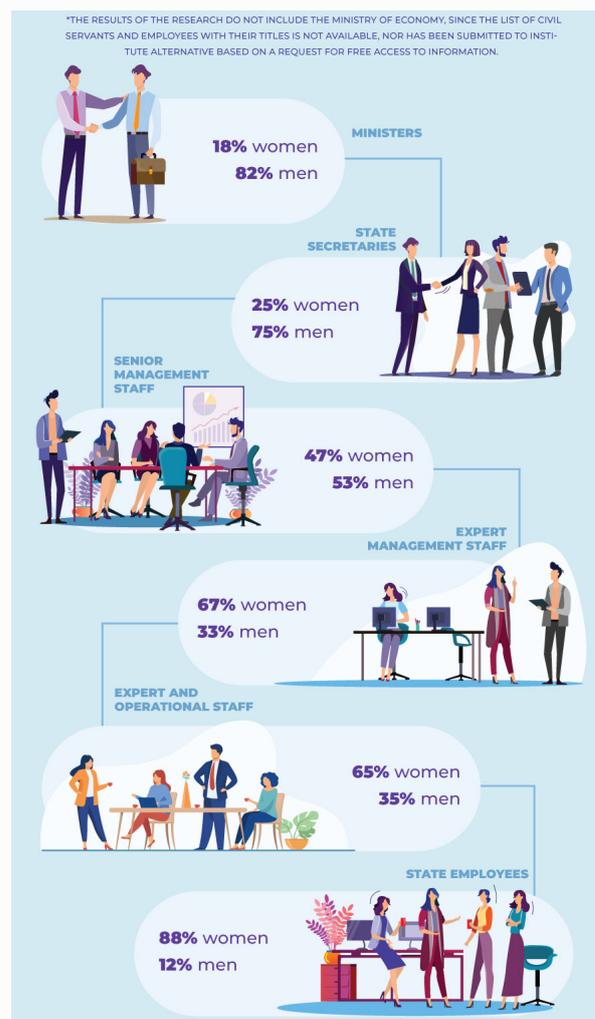
Institute for Democracy Societas Civilis Skopje (IDSCS) created a database containing 77 reports, manuals, studies and policy briefs from civil society organizations with recommendations from various aspects of the fight against corruption, state capture and the ongoing reform processes.

Source: IDSCS, June 2020

WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN THE MONTENEGRIN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Institute Alternativa (IA) released new infographics on the representation of the women in Montenegro. Across the country, women are slightly more numerous than men, adding up to 50.5% of the population. Women are more highly educated than men and more often achieve bachelor or master’s degree. Yet, positions of power are traditionally held by men and it is not quite common for a woman in Montenegro to hold a high-paid managerial position. Although more numerous in our public administration, women do not hold decision-making positions and the ratio of women decreases while going up the hierarchical ladder.

Source: Institut Alternativa



ANTI-CORRUPTION NEWS FROM THE SEE REGION

The current section of the Newsletter presents a summary of the latest anti-corruption news from the SEE region, based on consolidated information from multiple sources, such as media outlets and narratives received by the SELDI project partners.

IMF STAFF CONCLUDES A REMOTE STAFF VISIT TO ALBANIA

Three proposals from the Albanian government have been strongly opposed by international as well as local experts: the draft on fiscal amnesty and proposals to remove the profit tax for businesses with annual turnover up to ALL 14 million (EUR 110 000) and VAT for businesses with annual turnover up to ALL 10 million (EUR 81 000) until 2029. Either way, changing the tax base so drastically can only undermine tax compliance. IMF Staff noted in their press release that “effective systems must be created first to detect tax evasion and to prevent opportunities for money laundering and corruption.” Under these conditions, any further disruption to the tax system may cause an increase in informality.

Source: International Monetary Fund, July 1st, 2020

ALBANIAN OSCE CHAIRMANSHIP PLACES INTO FOCUS THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION IN THE DIGITAL ERA

This year Albania took over the Chairmanship of the OSCE with its top priority being the fight against corruption. Under this focus, a two-day high level online conference was held on Good Governance and the Fight against Corruption in the Digital Era. It focused on strengthening the principles of transparency, integrity and accountability of the representatives of participating States. The Albanian Minister of Justice, acting as National Anti-Corruption Coordinator, emphasised the use of the electronic monitoring system (IPSI), which would ensure the horizontal extension of the Anti-Corruption Action Plan to many institutions in an integrated manner.

Source: The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), July 6-7th, 2020

CASE OF THE FORMER INTERIOR MINISTER STILL UNRESOLVED IN ALBANIA

The Special Court of Appeal for Corruption and Organized Crime overturned a first-instance court ruling on the former Albanian Minister of Interior Saimir Tahiri after his conviction and remands the case for retrial. According to The Special Court of Appeals, the prosecution has investigated the former Minister for criminal involvement and drug trafficking, convicting him of abuse of office. This has led to a violation of the Code of Criminal Procedure, as the first-instance court has filed new charges against the former minister for which he has not been investigated.

Source: Exit News, June 26th, 2020

MACEDONIAN CIVIC ASSOCIATIONS CALL FOR ADOPTION OF ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LAW

Nine networks of civic associations comprising more than 100 organisations have called upon the political parties that will run in the parliamentary elections to support the priority adoption of the Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination by future members of the Parliament.

Source: Platform for equal opportunities, July 2020.

EC PRESENTS DRAFT NEGOTIATING FRAMEWORKS FOR ALBANIA AND N. MACEDONIA TO THE COUNCIL

The European Commission presented to the Council draft negotiating frameworks for Albania and North Macedonia, laying out the guidelines and principles for their accession talks. The Commission was invited to submit these proposals in March 2020 by the General Affairs Council when it decided to open negotiations with both countries. According to the Commission, draft frameworks are divided into three parts: principles governing the accession negotiations, substance of the negotiations, and negotiations procedure. The objective of the negotiations is for Albania and North Macedonia to adopt the EU acquis in its entirety and ensure its full implementation and enforcement upon accession.

The draft negotiating frameworks build on the experience of past enlargements and the ongoing accession negotiations. They integrate the revised enlargement methodology, take into account the evolving EU acquis, and reflect the countries' specific situations.

Source: EWB, 01 July 2020

UNJUSTIFIED COST OF TIRANA INCINERATOR CONCESSION

The Supreme Audit Institution in Albania has published the audit report on the feasibility study for the Tirana incinerator concession, owned by a company that the Supreme State Audit, SAI suspects of corruption. The audit report revealed legal, financial and procedural violations, raising suspicions of manipulation. Contrary to the content of the feasibility study, SAI auditors estimate the cost per unit of incinerator as 40.6 EUR/ton rather than 29 EUR/ton.

Source: Reporter.al, July 6th, 2020

NEW LAW FOR PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS COMES TO FORCE IN NORTH MACEDONIA

The Special Public Prosecutor's Office (SPO) became history with the new Law for Public Prosecution that has come to force in North Macedonia. The new law guarantees that the proceedings initiated by the SPO will continue, with the cases under the jurisdiction of the SPO assigned to the public prosecutor's offices. According to Article 110, illegally taped conversations cannot be the basis for an indictment, except in cases submitted to a competent Court by June 30, 2017. Alongside the implementation of the new law, the Council of Public Prosecutors will have to consider increasing the number of public prosecutors in the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office for Prosecution of Organized Crime and Corruption.

Source: TV 21, 30 June 2020



**REPORTS
AND
ANALYSIS**



A COMPARATIVE OVERVIEW OF THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARY ANTI-CORRUPTION OVERSIGHT IN THE BALKANS REGION

Given the number and scope of the functions performed by the government, the risk of corruption is significant. The oversight role of the Parliament is thus key to ensuring accountability and transparency of the executive branch. This text addresses the forms through which the Parliament supervises the national anticorruption institutions in North Macedonia, Serbia, Albania, Kosovo*, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Source: IDSCS, June 2020

ROLE OF THE NORTH MACEDONIAN ASSEMBLY IN ANTI-CORRUPTION TOWARD EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

In North Macedonia, improvements to the rule of law and anti-corruption represent a difficult conundrum: How to successfully fight corruption, when the rule of law is not upheld? How to condemn the corrupt without an independent judiciary? How to expect justice if the corrupt can buy their freedom, or worse, exploit their connections?

The problems with these two areas highlight the importance of the Assembly. In the process of EU accession, the Assembly stands against the two authorities with executive powers – the government with its ministries and agencies, and the judiciary. Specialised institutions – such as the commissions for prevention of corruption, and protection of competition – are also accountable to the Assembly. Hence, the Assembly can play a crucial role in producing visible results for the citizens, a prerequisite for approaching the EU. The main contribution of the Assembly in the process of European integration is to ensure the sustainability of reforms. On the one hand, lawmakers need to ensure dialogue between the government, the opposition and other stakeholders on the strategic benefits that reforms should provide for citizens. On the other hand, constant parliamentary oversight is needed to ensure success in reforms.

Source: IDSCS, June 2020

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY IN THE CASE-LAW OF ECHR

Institute Alternativa published a guidebook to better understand the EU minimum standard on the right to freedom and peaceful assembly enshrined in the Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The European Court of Human Rights has issued hundreds of decisions and rulings in which it had considered whether states had violated the right to freedom of assembly. The report provides a selection of decisions that can reflect the most important ruling of the court on this topic up to this day.

Source: Institute Alternativa, June 24, 2020.



OPENING GOVERNMENTS IN TIMES OF LOCKDOWN: LESSONS LEARNED FOR CITIZEN-ORIENTED ADMINISTRATIONS FROM THE COVID-19 CRISIS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Institute Alternativa examined the approaches of public administrations across the Western Balkans countries during the COVID-19 crisis while trying to look at the implementation of measures as well as communication strategies of the different regional governments. The report finds that clear and simple communication and transparency in the implementation of measures are more important in times of crisis, when citizens are most vulnerable and dependent on their relationship to the government. The Policy Brief also provides recommendations for governments in order to maximise the spread of best practice regarding transparency and communication in emergency situations.

Source: Institute Alternativa, June 26, 2020



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